



A GLASS act

Chris Bicknell, founder of Bicknell Interiors, shares his top tips for letting light into your home and bringing the outdoors in this summer with Emma Lily Pendleton

There's nothing quite like the outdoors for revitalising the mind and body. But with city living and lack of time for refreshing trips to the park, bringing the outdoors into your home can be the best way to reap the benefits.

Fresh outdoor-inspired colour schemes or rustic wood surfaces can be enough to create the ambiance of the countryside in your home. And with the English weather being what it is,

extending into your rarely habitable garden, blurring the line between the outdoors and indoors with glass extensions or retractable doors, can result in the perfect view of the changing seasons.

For specialist Surrey-based architecture and interior design company, Bicknell Interiors, half of its yearly projects are working with clients in South West London to bring the outdoors in with the creative glass structures and light-lending interior design.

'Victorian buildings are full of dark spaces,' says Chris Bicknell, who founded Bicknell Interiors with his wife, Barbara, in 2003. 'They're large rooms, often with tall ceilings but they don't let a lot of natural light in. It means that structural changes that incorporate glass are often the best option for bringing a sense of openness into your home.'

'A house's best aspect is typically overlooking the garden,' he explains. 'Usually from the family room or kitchen located at the back of the house, where



Floor-to-ceiling windows are a really effective way of connecting the inside of your home with the outside, whether as part of an existing room or as a new extension



it's easier to get planning permission. So these are the common rooms to extend. Often level with the garden, you can walk seamlessly from the interior to the exterior with bi-fold doors being brought into play.'

However, not every property has the space for such additions. If not extending into your garden, other options include expanding up into loft

giving a view of the skyline and letting light into otherwise uninhabitable territory.

These are popular and lifestyle-changing projects, but structural alterations are not the cheapest option for bringing nature's best indoors, Chris warns. 'It's expensive, not just the construction but everything down to the removal of rubbish, costs.' If you are

space, with modern or traditional-style dormer windows

considering a large construction project, experts such as Chris and his team can give a broad view of what's involved and how much it will cost, before you start.

If your budget can't stretch to it, then bring a touch of Mother Nature into your home with nature-inspired furniture and accessories. 'You don't have to make your house bigger to make it better - by bringing in new furniture, fixtures and fittings, colour schemes and fabrics, you can make a house look completely different without any construction work,' explains Chris.

Wallpaper with botanical prints and plant-based motifs can be featured on



A house's best aspect is overlooking the garden

anything from bedding to throws. Nature continues to be a popular subject for illustrators and there's a myriad of bird, insect, flora and fauna-themed designs to choose from on everything from wallpaper to dinner plates.

'Slightly pearlescent surfaces will bounce any natural light around the space you have,' advises Chris. 'As will glass chandeliers – they disperse the light more widely than drum shades. We offer interior design within our services because whether you have an extension or not, you need design to make the most of the space you have – it comes hand in hand.' Nature-inspired colour schemes including mossy greens and rustic furniture, can make all the difference.

So whether you're expanding your

home into the garden or bringing nature's best designs in, it's time to go natural and welcome the outdoors into your home.

✦ bicknell-interiors.co.uk



Creative Director, Chris Bicknell (second from right) with the Bicknell Interiors team

TOP TIPS FOR BRINGING THE OUTDOORS IN

FORRAGE AND FIND: Interesting natural artefacts that you may have found whilst on a walk can be incorporated into your home, from driftwood to shells.

FLORAL SPLENDOUR: Use similar plants and planters inside and out to maximise the outdoor feeling and to make your room feel like an extension of your garden.

LIGHT THE WAY: Many people in England are vitamin D deficient and natural light is the cure. Replace heavy drapery with lighter fabric, preferably with a sheer or pearlescent finish to maximise the amount of natural light in your home.

VENTILATION: Open your windows and make the most of the fresh air that can clear the mind. You don't have to be installing bi-fold doors.

ENJOY THE VIEW: Bicknell Interiors include re-landscaping among their services. If you're going to make the most of your garden, you have to cut those overgrown bushes. Bring the outdoors in with views over newly-landscaped gardens, complete with birds or your children playing.

ECO-FRIENDLY HOME: Bicknell Interiors use sustainable woods wherever possible, and using eco-friendly materials including paint, cleaning products and even bedding, is an option for everyone. Use them on a daily basis and you'll soon feel closer to nature.

FABULOUS FLORALS

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